

Classic Tales to Read, Love and Share

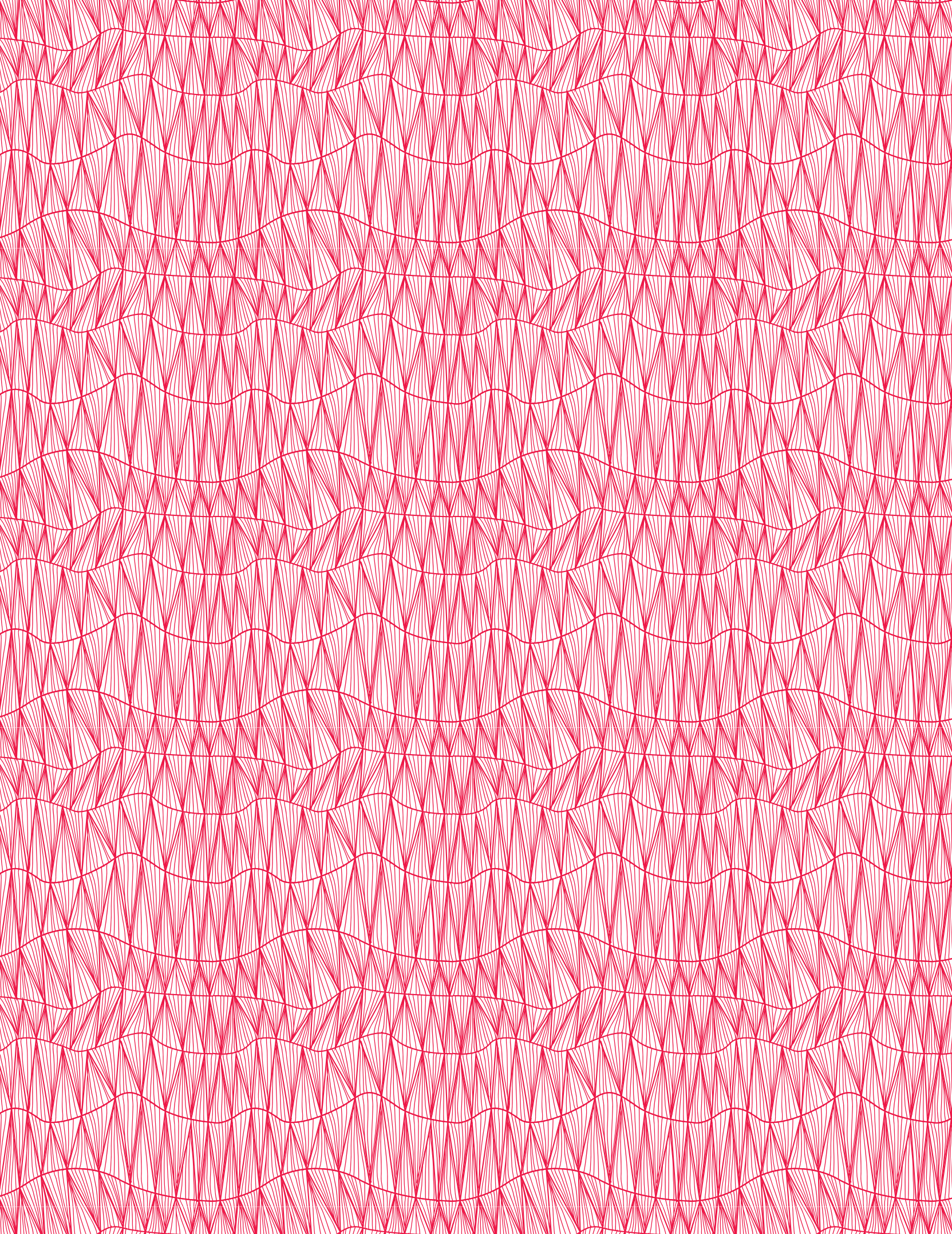
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Storytime™

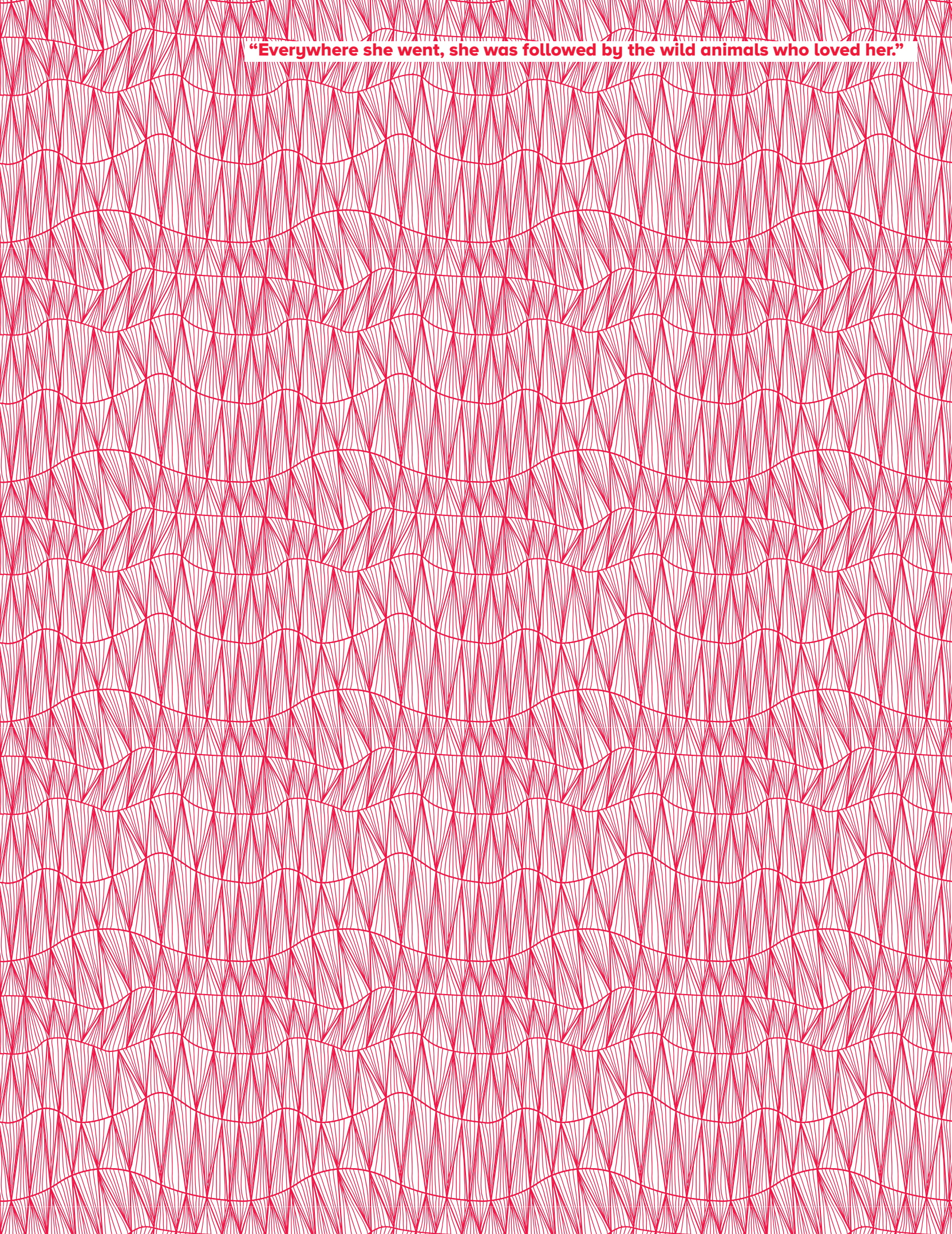
CHRISTMAS
STORY
SPECIAL!

Santa Claus

Twelve Days of Christmas, The Snow Child,
The Greedy Fox, The Queen of Winter & MORE!



“Everywhere she went, she was followed by the wild animals who loved her.”



**We wish you a
merry Storytime!**

Santa's story sleigh is packed
with festive tales for you! He's got
sparkling snow, reindeer, Christmas
trees and a partridge in a pear tree!

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On the cover



Brilliant Books

The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus

By L. Frank Baum. Read the magical story of Santa's first flight on his sleigh.

39

Famous Fables

The Greedy Fox

It's winter in the forest and Fox is feeling terribly hungry.

6

Myths and Legends

The Queen of Winter

A Scottish goddess tries to extend her frosty reign.

30

Around the World Tales

The Snow Child

Sergei and Maria's life-long wish for a child comes true.

10

Storyteller's Corner

Golden Stars

An orphan gets a magical reward for her kindness.

34

Poems and Rhymes

Twelve Days of Christmas

Join in our parade of eleven pipers piping!

16

Storytime Playbox

Make a sock snowman, have a go at our fun puzzles and play our Santa's Little Helper game.

46

Favourite Fairy Tales

The Little Fir Tree

A little tree goes on the adventure of a lifetime.

21

Story Magic

Read our recommendations for the best new Christmas books!

50





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The Greedy Fox

It was a cold harsh winter and the animals of the forest were hungry – especially Fox, who hadn't eaten a scrap of food for days.

"It's okay for Bear," shivered Fox, feeling sorry for himself. "She gets to curl up for the winter in her cosy cave with a full belly, dreaming of warmer days."

"And Squirrel can't complain!" he moaned. "He's been burying his secret fruit and nut supplies all over the place for months. But a fox? A fox like me has to hunt for food whatever the weather!"

Fox shook the freshly fallen snow from his coat and slumped to the ground. His tummy ached with hunger, but he felt so tired and weak, he soon fell asleep.



He was woken later that morning by the loud crunch, crunch of someone walking on snow. He opened his eyes to see a woodcutter pushing a large package into the hollow of a nearby tree. The woodcutter, who was bundled up in thick, warm clothes, seemed very pleased with his hiding place. He whistled happily to himself and went on his way – he didn't see Fox lying close by, covered in a thick layer of snow.

Fox sniffed the air, hopefully. "I must be dreaming!" he thought. "Is that chicken I can smell? Is hunger making me imagine things?"

But an icy breeze wafted towards Fox and there it was again – the unmistakable aroma of roast chicken, coming from the tree hollow. It was impossible to resist. ➡





Story Tip

Use this story as a starting point for talking about what animals do in winter. What do they eat? Which animals hibernate and where do they store their food? Choose one hibernating animal and learn all about it.

Fox used all his energy to walk over to the tree and, inside its thin hollow, he spied the package. One sniff told him that this was no dream – it really was filled with delicious food.

“How can I get to it?” thought Fox desperately. “I’ll never fit inside such a long, thin space.”

But Fox was so terribly hungry, he knew he had to try. He pushed his head and shoulders as far into the hollow as he could, then tried to squeeze in his body. Much to his surprise, he had become so thin, he could fit inside quite easily.

Once inside the hollow, he quickly tore open the woodcutter’s bag and his eyes lit up at the feast before him.

There was enough food to feed a fox for many days. There were two roast chickens, a side of baked ham, a loaf of bread and several rolls, huge hunks of cheese and three big rosy apples.

Fox couldn’t believe his good fortune and, within minutes, he had gobbled up a whole chicken. It was delicious – the best thing he had ever tasted! However, as he hadn’t eaten for so long, his tummy quickly felt full.

“But I can’t leave all this food here,” thought Fox. “What if another animal finds it? Or what if the woodcutter takes it away again? What if I don’t find any more food this winter?”

So, despite his bulging belly, Fox carried on eating. He ate the second

chicken, the baked ham, the loaf of bread, the hunks of cheese and all three apples. By the time he had finished, Fox had more than satisfied his hunger and his tummy felt quite fit to burst.

“I should get out of here,” he sighed. “I don’t want to get caught by that woodcutter with his axe.”

So Fox heaved himself up and tried to squeeze out of the hollow. But, this time, he wasn’t quite so thin. In fact, his tummy was now so big and round,

he couldn’t get out at all. Try as he might, he was trapped inside the tree!

Luckily for him, while he had been scoffing all the food, the snow had fallen so heavily that the woodcutter couldn’t find his way back to the tree.

Greedy Fox was forced to stay in the hollow for many days until he was thin enough to squeeze his way out again. As he leapt onto the snowy forest floor, he promised himself that he would never be so foolish and greedy again. 🌀



Spot It!

Can you spot a stash of Squirrel's nuts hidden in our story pictures?



The Snow Child

On the edge of a forest in Russia, lived a couple called Sergei and Maria. Though they had lived long and healthy lives, they had never felt truly happy, because they had always longed for a child.



They loved to watch the local children play, but it wasn't quite the same as having a child of their very own.

One winter, the snow fell deep in the forest – deeper than ever before. When it finally stopped, the village children squealed with delight as they jumped into snowdrifts and threw snowballs at each other. Sergei and Maria watched them fondly.

When the children started to build snowmen, Sergei laughed and said, "Let's join them! Let's make our own snowman!"

"Why not?" chuckled Maria. They wrapped themselves up warmly and went out into the sparkling snow.

As they started to build, Maria said, "Anyone can make a snowman. Let's make our own little snow child instead!"

And so the two set to work building and shaping the body, giving it two little arms and two little legs. Next, they started on the head. The village children soon gathered round.

“What are you making?” they asked.

“A snow child!” laughed the couple.

They gave their snow child curly hair, a sweet little nose, cute dimpled cheeks and two blue beads for eyes. Finally, Sergei carved out the mouth.



The couple stepped back to admire their work and, just as they did so, the snow child let out a warm breath and smiled. The icy snow magically

melted away from its face and there, before them, was a little girl with eyes as blue as forget-me-nots, lips as red as cherries, a tangle of blonde ringlets and snow-white skin.

“Am I dreaming?” said Sergei, rubbing his eyes, but Maria didn’t hear him – she had already run towards the little girl and had thrown her arms around her. The girl hugged Maria tightly.

“It’s a miracle!” cried Maria. “Our wish has been granted at last! Come, little Snegurochka,” as she named the snow child, “we must get you warm.”

And Maria led the little girl into their cottage, leaving Sergei and the rest of the village children lost for words. ➡



Little Snegurochka was indeed a miracle and every day Sergei and Maria's cottage was filled with visitors, eager to meet the famous snow child. Snegurochka quickly made friends with the village children and they played together all winter, filling the village with the sound of joy and laughter. Sergei and Maria had never been happier.



At last, winter drew to a close and the snow melted away. The spring sun warmed the earth and, soon, the first

flowers began to blossom. Birds sang cheerfully and all felt bright and gay – all except for Snegurochka, who grew sadder with each passing day.

As it grew warmer outside, the snow child stopped going out to play and, instead, spent her days curled up in dark corners of the cottage or in the shadow of a tree. But when the sun went down, Snegurochka returned to her joyful, playful self.



Sergei and Maria started to worry for their little girl, so when the village children invited Snegurochka to a forest picnic, they thought it was a good idea – the trees would protect her from the sun she so disliked and she would be sure to have some fun.

Snegurochka wanted to stay at home, but the couple urged her to go. “It will do you some good to play with your friends, dear!” they smiled.

Before she left, Maria said to the children, “Please take care of our little Snegurochka!”

And, as they skipped into the trees, the village children called, “Don’t worry, Maria, we will!”

They built dens and played hide and seek, and when the sun sank in the sky, some of the older children made a fire and they gathered around it to sing merry songs and tell stories. As the fire started to dwindle, the children began to play a new game. They all arranged themselves in a long line and, one after another, jumped over the glowing embers and made a wish.

“Just do as we do, Snegurochka!” they explained.

But when it came to Snegurochka’s turn, the children heard a loud sigh and when they turned round to see her jump over the fire, she had gone.

“Where can she be?” they wondered. ➔



Snegurochka did have fun that day. With her playmates, she made pretty crowns from wild flowers, and fairy wands from twigs.

Write It!

What’s your favourite season? Write down as many words as you can to describe your favourite time of the year and talk about why you like it.



“She must be hiding from us!” said one of the girls, and the children ran into the trees to look for Snegurochka, but they couldn’t find her anywhere.

“Perhaps she went home?” said a boy, so they set off for her cottage. But when they found that she wasn’t there and told Sergei and Maria what had happened, everyone’s happiness soon turned to sadness and worry.

For many days after that, Sergei and Maria and all the adults in the village hunted high and low for Snegurochka, but she was nowhere to be seen.

At last, the couple found themselves back at the spot where the children had made their bonfire.

In the ashes, Sergei saw something twinkling in the light and, when he looked closely, he found a solid silver snowflake, no bigger than a charm you’d find on a necklace.

All at once, he and Maria guessed what had happened – their precious little girl of snow had leapt over the flames of the fire and its heat had melted her away. The silver snowflake was all that remained of her.

For the rest of her days, Maria wore the silver snowflake around her neck so that she could always remember the magical winter they had enjoyed with their beloved little Snegurochka – the snow child. ❄️



Did You Know?

Today, Snegurochka – the Snow Maiden – is an important part of Russia’s New Year celebrations. She wears a pearly snowflake crown and travels with old Father Frost in his horse-drawn sleigh to deliver presents to little children.








Twelve Days of Christmas



In the first day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
A partridge in a pear tree.

In the second day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

In the third day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.



On the fourth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Four calling birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.



On the fifth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Five gold rings,
Four calling birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

On the sixth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four calling birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

On the seventh day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four calling birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.



In the eighth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me

Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four calling birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

In the ninth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me

Nine ladies dancing,
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four calling birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

On the tenth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me

Ten lords a-leaping,
Nine ladies dancing,
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four calling birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

On the eleventh day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me

Eleven pipers piping,
Ten lords a-leaping,
Nine ladies dancing,
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four calling birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree. ➔



G on the twelfth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Twelve drummers drumming,
Eleven pipers piping,
Ten lords a-leaping,
Nine ladies dancing,
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four calling birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.



The Little Fir Tree

In the heart of the forest, there stood a young fir tree. It grew in a fine spot with plenty of fresh air and sunlight, but it was surrounded by trees that were far taller and stronger than itself.

The little fir tree would look up at the other trees and wish that it was big and strong too. In its first winter, a hare hopped right over the little fir tree. It shook its branches with irritation and was so cross that it barely noticed the beauty of the snowy forest around it. ➡





“We know! We know!” said two fat robins

“Where are they going? Will they get to see the world?” wondered the little fir tree.

When spring came, it didn’t notice the children who had their picnics by its side; the baby birds that played among its branches; or the sunbeams that danced among its needles. All the little fir tree could think was, “I wish I would grow up quickly. I wish I could see what the world is like.”

One year passed and then another, and though the little fir tree grew, it was never quite fast enough. “Why can’t I grow more quickly?” it sighed.



One snowy winter, some woodcutters came by and chopped down some of the taller, more handsome trees in the green forest.

“We know! We know!” said two fat robins. “We flew into town and we peeped through the windows. Such splendour awaits them! They will be planted in pots in warm rooms, and decorated with gingerbread, and colourful toys and candles!”

Every twig of the fir tree trembled at the thought of it. “Oh, how I wish I could live in someone’s room and be decorated with beautiful things!”

“Oh, little fir tree,” sparkled the sunbeams. “Rejoice in your youth!”

“Oh, little fir tree,” sang the birds. “Stay and enjoy the green forest!”

“Oh, little fir tree,” whispered the wind. “Let me play in your branches.”

But the little fir tree didn't listen and every day it longed to be somewhere else – somewhere more exciting.



Over the next year, it grew into a tall, strong tree. Everyone who passed by said how beautiful it was. When the woodcutters returned in winter, it was the first tree to be cut down.

“At last!” thought the fir tree. It was placed in a horse-drawn cart and carried to a large house. Two servants lifted the fir tree into the house and set it down in a grand drawing room.

The room was filled with fine paintings, furniture and ornate vases. There were velvet curtains and silken sofas, and a beautiful window, where a pot stood waiting for the tree.

The fir tree shivered with excitement as it was placed in the pot. “What will happen next?” it wondered.

Several servants came into the room and sighed at the sight of the lovely fir tree. They started to hang colourful decorations all over its branches – there were small net bags filled with sweets, golden apples and clusters of walnuts, miniature dolls, wooden toys, baubles in every colour of the rainbow, and hundreds of tiny candles, stuck to the branches with melted wax. Finally, at the very top of the tree, they placed a shimmering gold star. ➡



"How the tree will shine
tonight!" said the servants.

Hidden Treasures

Can you find these three Christmas
decorations on the Little Fir Tree?
Tick the boxes when you find them.





“Oh, if only tonight would come!” thought the impatient fir tree. “And then what? Will I stay here forever, dressed like this?” It longed so badly for the evening to come quickly.

Later that night, a servant came to light every candle, so that the fir tree looked dazzlingly beautiful. A family dressed in fine clothing came into the room, and the children gasped with delight to see the splendour of the fir tree.

The tree’s branches quivered with uncertainty. “What will they do to me now? Will I stay here?” it worried.

Soon the family were singing carols around the tree, and the little ones danced around it, ruffling its branches as they went. Later, a maid came to snuff out the candles and the children began plundering the fir tree for its hidden toys and treats. Nobody paid any attention to the tree now – they were too busy playing with their gifts.



At last, the children tugged on the sleeve of one of the older men.
“Daddy, tell us a story!” they begged. He smiled and sat down next to the tree, where he told them the story of Humpty Dumpty, who fell off a wall, but married a princess and became a king. It was a wonderful story – the first the tree had ever heard.

“Maybe that will happen to me,” the tree thought. “One day, I might fall over and marry a princess too. Perhaps I will become a king?”

When the stories were over, the fir tree was left alone in the room and it thought, “I will try not to tremble or worry tomorrow. I will be still and straight, so I can enjoy it more and the children can admire me better.”



However, when the morning came, none of the children returned. Instead, two servants dug the fir tree out of its pot, and carried it up to a dark, dusty corner of the attic.

The fir tree lay alone in the darkness for many hours, wondering what might happen next in its adventures. ➡





“It’s winter outside now,” thought the tree. “Perhaps that is why I am here – the ground is too cold and hard to plant me again. They must be waiting for spring to come round again!”

And so the fir tree lay patiently in the dark, dusty attic for many long days and nights, and it often thought, “How nice it would be to feel the sunbeams or the breeze on my branches right now. How I miss the hare that used to hop over me, and the beauty of the forest I grew up in!”

One night, two little mice appeared at the fir tree’s side, squeaking and rustling among its branches.

“It might be nice and warm here in the branches of this old tree,” said one mouse to the other.

“I’m not an old tree!” said the fir tree. “There are many trees older than me in the forest!”

“Oh, do tell us where you came from!” said the mice, excited to have some company. “Have you seen the world? We have only ever seen inside the food cupboard.”

So the fir tree told them of the world it had seen – the beautiful green forest with the singing birds, the shimmering snow in winter, the colourful flowers in summer. It told them of the hare that used to hop over it, and the sunbeams and the wind that played amongst its branches. It told them of its journey to the house and how its branches had been so beautifully decorated. It told them of the singing, dancing children and the story of Humpty Dumpty.

“How lucky you have been!” gasped the mice. “How happy you must have been!” they squeaked.

And, all of a sudden, the fir tree felt quite foolish for not realising it at the time. “Yes, and how silly I have been,” said the tree quietly, and it sat in the dark, wishing for its old life again.

One fine day at the end of winter, two servants came into the attic and carried the fir tree out into the bright daylight. They left it in a wild corner of the garden, next to the weeds and the grass cuttings, but the fir tree didn't mind at all – the sun shone brightly and, once more, the sunbeams danced on its yellowing branches. The cool breeze ruffled what was left of its needles and a fat robin landed on a branch, near to its only remaining Christmas decoration – the golden star at the top. As the tree looked around at the spring blossoms and the blue sky, it suddenly realised how very lucky its life had been. 🌀

Imagine It!

Imagine you're a Christmas tree. What does it feel like to be decorated? How does it feel to be lit up with fairy lights? Can you write a story about Christmas Day from the perspective of a tree?





The Queen of Winter

Long ago, when the world was young, Scotland was ruled over by a powerful goddess called Cailleach, who sat on a throne at the top of Ben Nevis.

Cailleach roamed the glens and bens of Scotland, guarding the wolves, deer and cattle from hunters. Everywhere she went, she was followed by the wild animals who loved her. She wore an old grey shawl and always carried her magic hammer. With these two things, she reigned supreme as the Queen of Winter.

Every year in late autumn, she washed her shawl in the sea and placed it on top of the mountains to dry. When she lifted it, the peaks were covered with snow. Then, using the hills as stepping stones, she travelled across the land, pounding it with her magic hammer to spread frost and ice in all directions.

As winter wore on, with each passing day, Cailleach grew older. Her brow became wrinkled and her hair turned white and trailed behind her. At the end of every winter, she travelled to sip from the secret Well of Youth, then she slept through spring and summer.

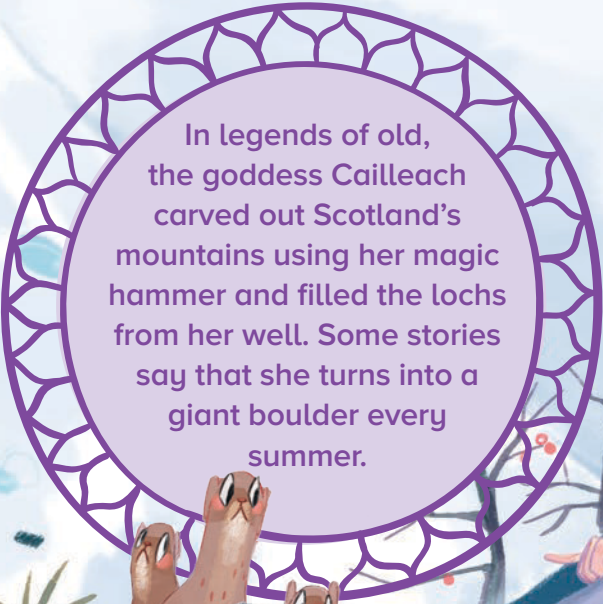
However, one year, Cailleach decided that she wanted winter to last forever. She covered Scotland with a heavy blanket of snow, stirred up biting gales and froze the rivers and lochs solid. Soon everyone wished for spring.



Cailleach had many servants and one of them was a fair young lady called Bride. Bride had golden brown hair and eyes the colour of violets.

Cailleach had always been jealous of Bride's youth and beauty – so she always gave her the most horrible chores to do. One day, she sent Bride down to the icy river and told her to wash a brown woollen blanket until it was pure white. It was an impossible task and, after scrubbing for many hours, Bride's hands were so blue with cold, she broke down and wept.

But as her tears fell to the icy ground, snowdrops suddenly pushed their tiny, delicate heads through the snow and, when she stood up to make her way back to Cailleach, primroses sprang up at her feet. You see, the Queen of Winter didn't know that many years before, the fairies had blessed young Bride with the spirit of spring. ➡

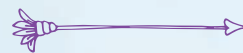


In legends of old, the goddess Cailleach carved out Scotland's mountains using her magic hammer and filled the lochs from her well. Some stories say that she turns into a giant boulder every summer.

Bride's path passed by a mountain where Cailleach's son, blue-eyed Angus, lived. When Angus saw Bride and the flowers springing up around her every step, he was so moved, he fell in love with her.

Angus rushed out to speak to Bride and, as he did so, grass grew around their feet and a bird broke the wintry silence with its sweet song. The magic of spring was happening all around them. Bride's heart was filled with joy, because she knew that Cailleach's

frosty reign must be coming to an end – and that she and Angus were meant to rule over spring together.



When Cailleach saw the snow melting, she was filled with fury. Though she felt worn and frail, she smashed her magic hammer to the ground, so that no flower could bloom and no blade of grass could survive. She caused a violent snowstorm to whip around Bride and Angus, which tore the new flowers from their stalks.

Say It!

The Queen of Winter's name, Cailleach, means 'veiled one'.

It is pronounced in lots of different ways, but the easiest way to say it is Cal-e-ak.

However, the strength of their love soon weakened Cailleach's powers – spring was surging through the land and there was nothing the Queen of Winter could do to fight it. She had run out of strength.

Realising her reign was over, Cailleach fled to the Well of Youth, where she took a sip from its magic waters and became young and beautiful again. There, she fell into a deep slumber that lasted until the following winter.

Meanwhile, Bride dipped her hand into the river and the ice melted away. The fish jumped in celebration, the birds burst into song and, together, she and Angus walked the land, bringing it back to life. The Queen and King of Spring had chased the Queen of Winter away... for now. 🌀



Golden Stars

Long ago and not so far away from where you live, there was once a poor girl whose mother and father died suddenly one night.

There was no one to look after her and all she had left were the clothes she was wearing and a loaf of bread. Sad and all alone in the world, the girl decided to set off for a walk in the hope that she might find someone kind to look after her.



Draw It!

Design your own cosy hat, scarf and mitten set to snuggle up in this winter. What colour is it? Does it have a pattern?

After a while, she met an old beggar, who was hunched by the side of the road. "Please can you spare some food for a hungry old man, miss?"

The girl felt so sorry for the frail old man that she gave him her loaf of bread, without even taking a crumb for herself. "There you go, sir," she said. "May it ease your hunger."

She went on her way and soon met a little boy who was sitting on the edge of the path, weeping.

"What has happened to you?" asked the girl.

"One of the older children stole my woolly hat and my ears are so cold, they're aching."

"You poor thing," smiled the girl. "Here, you can have my hat." And she gave her own woolly hat to the child.

The little boy beamed with happiness and ran off to play with his friends.

The girl walked on and soon came to a little girl, who was wailing.

"What is wrong?" asked the girl.

"I caught my scarf on the fence at the park and it has fallen apart. My mother knitted it for me and will be very cross." ➡



“There, there,” said the girl in a comforting voice. “Here, you can have my scarf. My mother knitted mine too, and it looks just like yours.” And she wrapped the scarf around the little girl’s neck. The girl gave her a shy smile and ran home.

Now the sun was starting to set and the air was turning frosty. The girl walked on to the edge of the town, where she saw a lady, dressed in rags. She was holding a baby in her arms and sobbing.

“Can I help you, madam?” asked the girl.

“I don’t think so, my dear,” wept the lady. “I’m crying because winter is upon us and I can’t afford to buy wool to knit a blanket for my baby.”

“You can have this,” said the girl. And she took off her coat and draped it over the baby to keep it warm. The baby chuckled and the lady smiled, but the girl didn’t stop – she just carried on walking into the woods.



As she walked along the snowy woodland path, she spotted a young deer in the trees. It had caught its leg on some sharp thorns and couldn’t escape. Slowly, the girl made her way over to the deer so that she didn’t give it a fright.

“Poor little thing,” she said, and she began to gently untangle the thorns that were wrapped so tightly around the deer’s leg.




It took so long that, by the time she had finished, it was dark. In the light of the moon, she could see that the deer was badly injured.

Without giving it a thought, the girl ripped at her own dress, tearing it into strips to make bandages for the deer. She wrapped the strips carefully around its legs until the deer was able to stand up and limp away.

The girl smiled as she watched the little deer, but standing there in the chill wind of the wintry night, she suddenly realised how very cold it was outside and how her stomach ached with hunger. She had given away her loaf of bread, her hat, her scarf, her coat and even some of her dress – and now, all of a sudden, she saw that she truly had nothing left in the world. ➡

“Poor little thing,” she said.





Feeling a great sadness in her heart, she stepped onto the moonlit path to begin her journey again. As she did so, she found that she was suddenly dressed in a fine, shimmering gown that seemed to be woven from moonbeams. She looked up at the sky in disbelief and saw that stars were falling from the heavens above her and, as they hit the ground, they turned into shining golden coins. It was a winter miracle!

Laughing at the wonder of it all, the little girl gathered up as many coins as she could in the skirts of her new gown. The girl walked back to town, eager to share her new riches with everyone. She was lit up, not by the moonbeams shining in her dress or the shimmer of starry coins, but by her own happiness. 🌀



Act It Out!

Cut lots of coins out of golden card or tin foil and shower them down like shooting stars. How many can you catch?




The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus

By L. Frank Baum

They were happy days for Claus when he carried his toys to the local children. Wherever he showed his merry face, he received a cordial welcome, for his fame had spread.

At each village the children swarmed about him, following his footsteps wherever he went; and the women thanked him for the joy he brought their little ones. Everyone smiled and gave him kindly words.

Claus had been so industrious that all his shelves were filled with playthings, and after quickly supplying the little ones living near to Laughing Valley he saw he must now extend his travels to wider fields. He knew children were everywhere, and he longed to make as many as possible happy with his gifts. 





When his store of toys was exhausted, he set about making a fresh supply. From seeing so many children and studying their tastes, he had acquired several new ideas about toys.

The dollies were, he had found, the most delightful playthings for babies, so Claus resolved to make many dolls, of all sizes, and to dress them in bright-coloured clothing. The older boys and girls loved the animals, so he made cats and elephants and horses. And many of the little fellows had musical natures and longed for drums and cymbals and whistles and horns. So he made toy drums, with tiny sticks to beat them with; and he made whistles from the willow trees, and horns from reeds, and cymbals from bits of beaten metal.

All this kept him busily at work, and before he realised it, winter came, with deeper snows than usual, and he knew he couldn't leave the valley with his heavy pack. So he remained at his work-bench, where he whistled and sang as merrily as ever.



One bright morning he looked from his window and saw two deer from the forest walking toward his house.

Claus was surprised – not that the friendly deer should visit him, but that they walked on the snow as easily as if it were solid ground. Throughout the valley the snow lay many feet deep. He had walked out of his house a day or two before and sunk to his armpits in a drift. So when the deer came

near, he opened the door and called to them:

“Good morning, Flossie and Glossie! Tell me how you are able to walk on the snow so easily.”

“It is frozen hard,” answered Flossie. “The surface is now as solid as ice.”

“Perhaps,” remarked Claus, “I might now carry my toys to the children.”

“Is it a long journey?” asked Flossie.

“Yes; it will take many days, for the pack is heavy,” answered Claus.

“Then you must wait until spring, Claus,” said Glossie.

“If I had your fleet feet,” said Claus, “I could make the journey in a day. Perhaps I could ride upon your back?”

“Oh no! Our backs are not strong enough,” said Flossie, decidedly. “But if you had a sledge, and could harness us to it, we might draw you easily, and your pack as well.”

“I’ll make a sledge!” exclaimed Claus. “Will you agree to draw me if I do?”

“Well,” replied Flossie, “we must first ask our guardians; but if they consent, we will gladly assist you.”

“Then go at once!” cried Claus. “By the time you are back, I shall be ready to harness you to my sledge.” ➡

Did You Know?

You probably know Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blitzen better than Flossie and Glossie. These famous reindeer come from Clement Clarke Moore’s poem, ‘A Visit from St Nicholas’. But did you know that Donner and Blitzen were originally called Dunder and Blixem – Dutch for ‘Thunder’ and ‘Lightning’?



Flossie and Glossie gladly ran over the frozen snow to ask if they might carry Claus on his journey.

Meanwhile, the toy-maker hurriedly began the construction of a sledge, using material from his wood-pile. He made two long runners that turned upward at the front, with a platform. The harness was more difficult, but Claus twisted strong cords together and knotted them to fit around the deer's necks. It was soon completed.

Before long, Glossie and Flossie were back. They had permission to make the journey with Claus, provided they were back by daybreak.

"That is not a long time," said Flossie. "But we are swift and strong, and we can travel many miles in the night."

Claus hurried. He fastened the collars around their necks and harnessed them to his sledge. Then he placed a stool on the platform for a seat, and filled a sack with his toys.

"Are you ready?" asked Glossie.

Claus seated himself upon the stool, placed the sack of toys at his feet, and then gathered up the reins.

"All ready!" he shouted. "Away we go!"



The deer leant forward, lifted their slender limbs, and the next moment away flew the sledge over the frozen snow. The swiftness surprised Claus, for in a few strides they were across the valley and gliding over the plain. The moon shone brightly above.

Claus decided it was just as pleasant to travel by night as by day. The deer liked it better; for, though they wished to see something of the world, they were timid about meeting men, and now everyone was sound asleep.

Away and away they sped, on and on over the hills and through the valleys until they reached a village where Claus had never been.



Here he called them to stop, and they obeyed. But there was a new difficulty, for people had locked their doors and Claus couldn't enter the houses.

"I am afraid we have made our journey for nothing," he said. "I shall have to carry my toys home again without giving them to the children here."

"What's the matter?" asked Flossie.

"The doors are locked," answered Claus, "and I can't get in."

Glossie looked around. The snow was deep, and before them was a roof only a few feet above the sledge, with a broad chimney at its peak.

"Why don't you climb down that chimney?" asked Glossie.

Claus looked at it. "That would be easy enough if I were on top of the roof," he answered.

"Then hold fast and we will take you there," said the deer, and they gave one leap and landed by the chimney.

"Good!" cried Claus, and he slung the sack of toys over his shoulder and got into the chimney.

There was plenty of soot, but Claus didn't mind. By placing his hands and



knees against the sides he crept down until he reached the fireplace. Leaping over the coals, he found himself in a large sitting-room.

From this room two doorways led into smaller chambers. In one, a woman lay asleep next to a baby in a crib. Claus took a big doll from his sack and laid it in the crib. The little one smiled, as if it dreamt of its pretty plaything, and Claus crept softly from the room and entered the other door.

Here were two boys, fast asleep with their arms around each other's necks. Claus placed upon their bed a drum, a horn and a wooden elephant.

He did not linger, but climbed the chimney again and seated himself on his sledge.

"Can you find another chimney?" he asked the reindeer.

"Easily enough," replied the deer.

Down to the edge of the roof they raced and, without pausing, leapt through the air to the next roof.

"Don't be so long," called Flossie, "or we shall never be back by daybreak."

Claus made a trip down this chimney and found five children sleeping, who were quickly supplied with toys.

When he returned, the deer sprang to the next roof, and when he had climbed down all of the chimneys in the village, and had left a toy for every child, Claus found that his great sack was not yet half emptied.



"Onward, friends!" he called to the deer. "We must seek another village."

So away they dashed, and in a short time they came to a large city – the largest Claus had ever visited. He set to work at once and his beautiful deer carried him from one roof to another.

At last the supply of toys was completely exhausted.



With the empty sack at his feet, Claus seated himself in the sledge and turned the heads of Glossie and Flossie toward home.

“We must race for the Laughing Valley,” said Flossie. “Hold tight, friend!”

Claus held tight and the next moment was flying so swiftly that he could not see the trees as they whirled past. Up hill and down dale, swift as an arrow shot from a bow they dashed, and Claus left the deer to find their own way.

Finally, the sledge came to a sudden stop and Claus tumbled from his seat into a snowdrift. The sledge had come to a stop only a few feet from his own door. In the east, he saw the day breaking, and when he turned round, he spotted Glossie and Flossie just disappearing into the forest. 🌀



Find It!

Santa Claus dropped six of the presents in his sack. Can you find them for him in the picture?

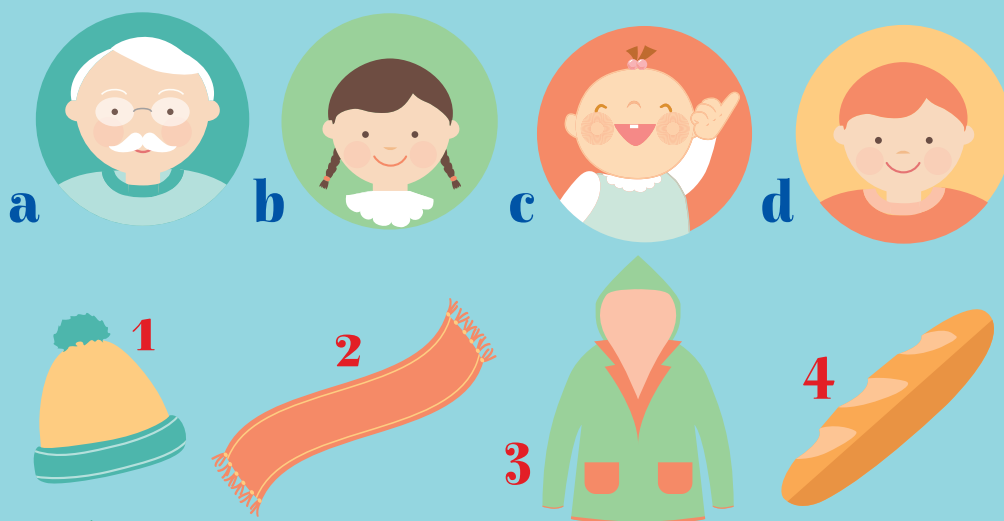
✴ **COMPETITION!** Win a copy of *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus*! See page 50.

Storytime playbox

Make sock snowman decorations and help Santa deliver his presents – but not before you’ve solved our story puzzles!

① LITTLE STARS!

Can you match up the items the girl in Golden Stars gives away to the people she gives them to?



② Present PILE-UP

How many presents do you get if you add up all the gifts in Twelve Days of Christmas? Write your answer here.



③ Quick Quiz

What does the Queen of Winter use to spread ice everywhere and shape Scotland’s mountains?



4

Snow Bodies

Which of these snow-covered shapes is the Greedy Fox? Circle the one you think is right!

E



A



B



C



D



Ask a grown-up!

5

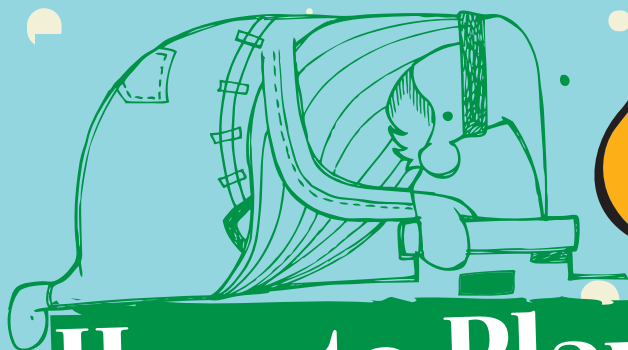
SOCK SNOWMAN

Make a cute little snowman decoration for your Christmas table, inspired by our Snow Child story.

- Before you begin, get everything together. You need scissors, a long white sock, a colourful ankle sock, rubber bands, rice, decorative ribbon, beads, buttons or pom-poms and strong glue.
- Cut the foot part off the bottom of your white sock. Turn the sock inside out, then tightly secure one open end with a rubber band.
- Turn the sock out the correct way again so that the rubber band is on the inside.
- Pour rice into the sock. When it's two-thirds full, twist a rubber band around the sock to separate the body from the head – this doesn't need to be tight.
- Pour in more rice to finish the head and secure the open top of the sock with another rubber band.
- Cut the foot section off a colourful sock and pull it over your snowman's head to make a hat, securing the top with another rubber band if you need to.
- Tie some ribbon around the snowman's neck to make a scarf.
- **To finish, give your snowman button, bead or pom-pom eyes, a nose and some buttons on its tummy!**



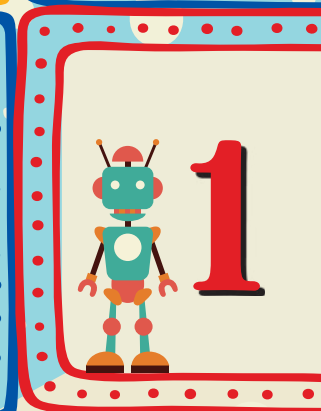
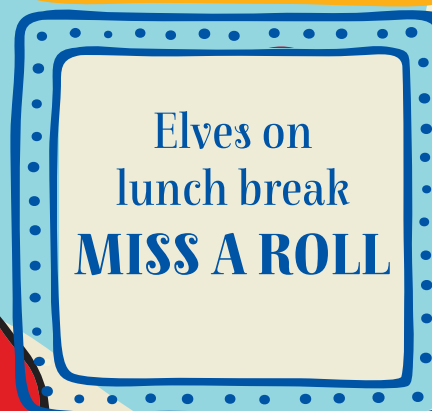
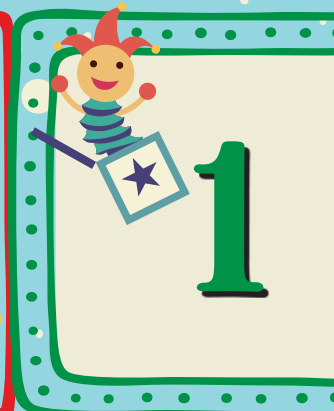
SANTA'S LITTLE HELPER



How to Play

You need two to four players and a dice to play this festive game! Print out our Gift Game Cards from storytimemagazine.com/free or use pennies as your presents.

- ★ Decide which player will go first and which of the four sacks you'll fill up – yellow, red, blue or green.
- ★ Player one throws the dice onto the game board. If you land on a 1, put one present in your sack; if you land on a 2, put two presents in your sack and so on.
- ★ Be sure to follow any special instructions you land on.
- ★ Players take it in turns to roll and each player has five rolls (or you can have more rolls and play for longer).
- ★ At the end of the game, count up the presents in your sack. Whoever has the most at the end of the game is Santa's helper!



Oh no, Santa has run out of toys! Can you help him fill his sack so that every girl and boy gets a gift on Christmas Day?



Print out our
Gift Game Cards at:
storytimemagazine.com/free

2



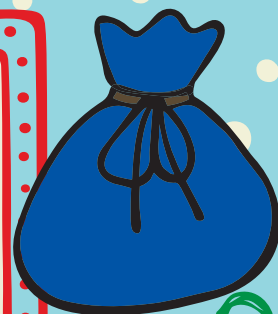
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1



AND A
BONUS ROLL!



Hole in sack
LOSE 2
PRESENTS

1



2



1



1



AND A
BONUS ROLL!

1



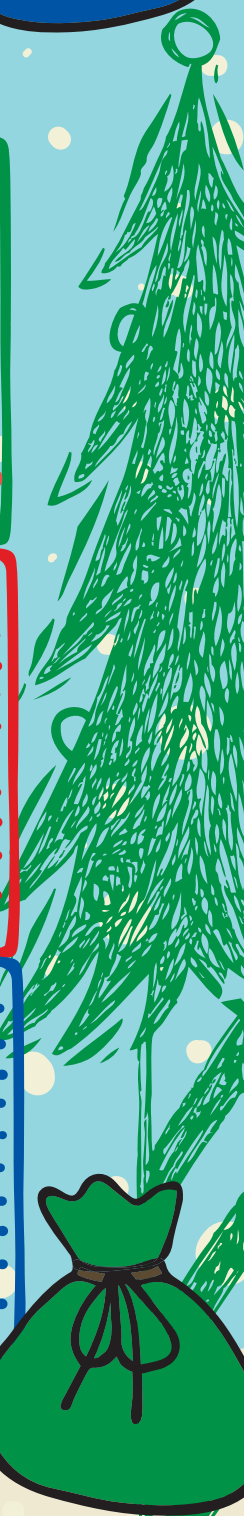
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2



1



STORY MAGIC

Fill up your Christmas stockings with brilliant festive books this year – your little story-lovers will love you for it!

4 Festive Books!

Book of the Month

Emma O'Donovan, who runs the brilliant book blog booksniffingpug.blogspot.co.uk, recommends four fab books for your Christmas list and our Book of the Month. Follow Emma on Twitter as @maybeswabey!

1. *The Snow Beast* by Chris Judge – the Beast and the Snow Beast unite in this madcap winter escapade, featuring an unexpected friendship and the ultimate Christmas party. (Andersen Press)
2. *The Red Prince* by Charlie Roscoe and Tom Clohosy Cole – an epic tale of courage, which will have readers on the edge of their seats as a prince in red pyjamas tries to escape his captors. (Templar Publishing)
3. *Penguin's Way* by Johanna Johnston and Leonard Weisgard – a beautiful exploration of the life of the emperor penguin. This is perfect for igniting a passion for the natural world. (Bodleian Children's Books)
4. *The Christmas Eve Tree* by Delia Huddy and Emily Sutton – this compelling and beautifully illustrated story about a homeless boy and a fir tree deftly conveys the true meaning of Christmas. (Walker Books)

Christmas for Greta and Gracie by Yasmeen Ismail is a delightful celebration of the magic of Christmas through a child's eyes. Yasmeen has perfectly captured the dynamics between siblings of different ages in this tribute to embracing differences. A true classic culminating in a magical encounter with Father Christmas. Perfect for reading on Christmas Eve! (Nosy Crow.)

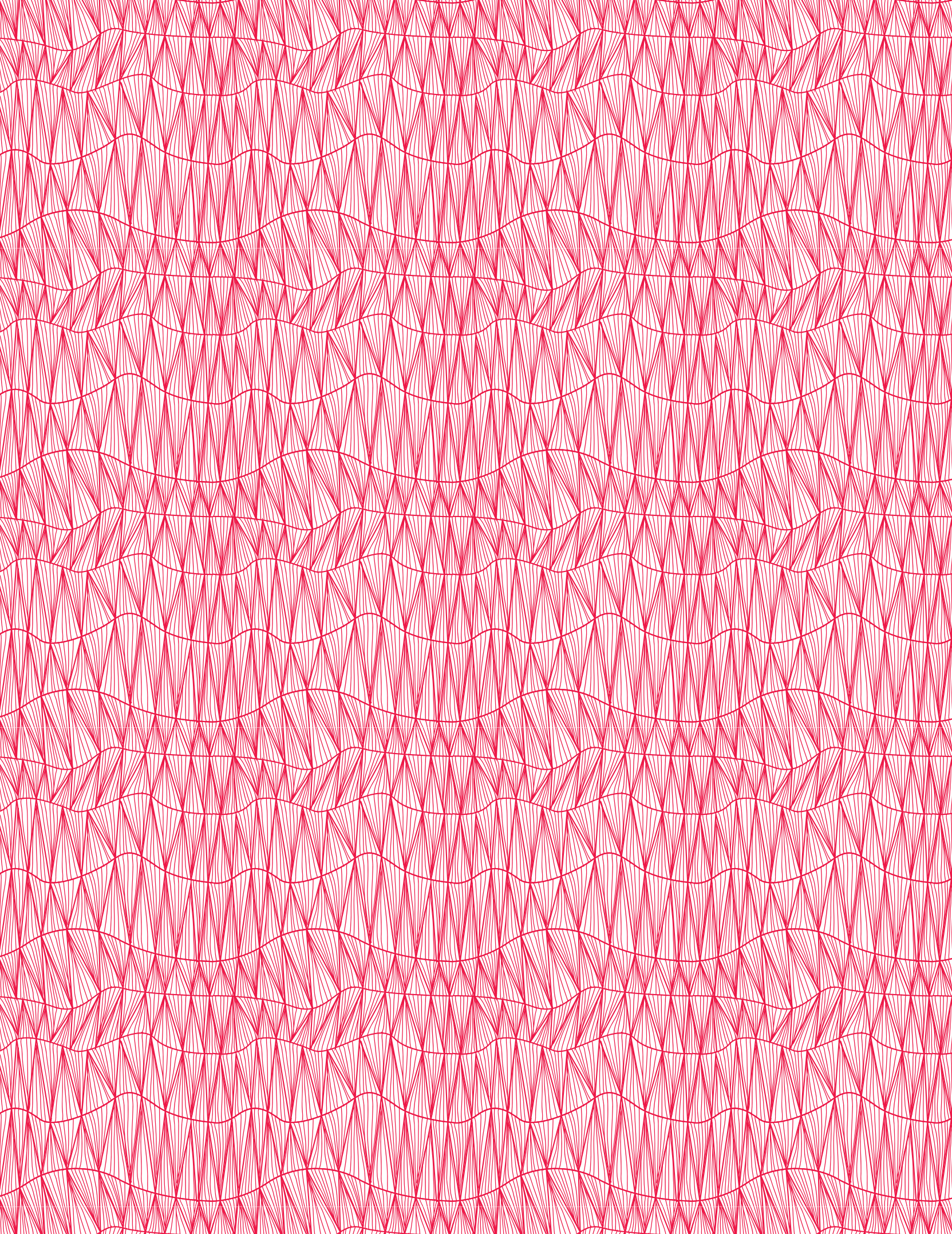


CLAUS COMPETITION!

Follow Santa Claus on his incredible adventures! Enter to win one of five copies of L. Frank Baum's amazing book, *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus*! **Visit:** storytimemagazine.com/win

WIN!

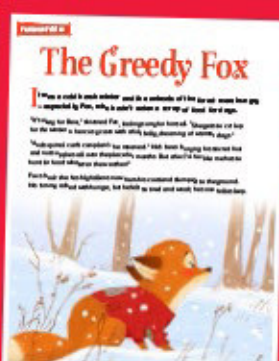




Santa's Favourite Magazine!



A little girl sees a Christmas miracle



Fox bites off more than he can chew



PLUS sing-a-long with the Twelve Days of Christmas



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www.storytimemagazine.com

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Coming
in issue
16

